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## Hebron superintendent looking at ways to avert layoffs

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HEBRON — The Board of Education will hold a special meeting Tuesday at the urging of a union representing noncertified staff in an attempt to preserve three positions.

School Superintendent Eleanor Cruz is expected to present alternate reductions to other areas of the school board's previously adopted budget to avert the three layoffs.

The positions slated for elimination in a June 15 budget vote include a custodial position at \$27,928, a paraprofessional at \$19,695, and a secretary at \$27,316.

Board Chairwoman Jane Dube said she was hopeful the positions could be reinstated but wasn't sure what options Cruz has planned.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at the Gilead School following the cancellation of a regularly scheduled June 24 meeting.

"All we are expecting is that she make a good faith effort to retain these positions," said Matthew O'Connor, a spokesman for the Connecticut State Employees Association and Service Employees International Union.

The bargaining units represent 153 Hebron staff, 53 of whom are non-certified school employees, such as paraprofessionals, food service workers, and custodial and secretarial staff.

O'Connor said that throughout the budget process, it has been unclear as to which positions were slated to be cut and that union members are seeking further clarification from the school board.

"The members of our union all provide direct frontline services that impact students," O'Connor said, emphasizing that positions such as paraprofessionals work directly with students in the classroom.

School board member Kathy Shea said she feels badly for those who were initially told they had lost their jobs when that decision could change.

"People need to know whether they have a job or not. The sooner the better," Shea said.

O'Connor said school management had approached several of its members recently saying their positions were going to be eliminated in an effort to give them proper notification.

O'Connor said these notifications, coupled with the reductions adopted June 15, still have left many members wondering who is being laid off.

The school board adopted its no increase \$11.71 million budget at the meeting. The board originally had requested a 3.99 percent increase, or \$467,557, but was forced to make reductions by the Board of Finance after the budget failed twice.

Shea had been pushing throughout the budget process to "reduce, combine, or eliminate"

administrative positions, particularly the curriculum director and assistant principal.

"We would not have had to cut so deeply into so many line items like we did throughout the budget season," Shea said, saying she was "curious" to see Cruz's plan to find an additional savings of \$74,939 in order to reinstate the three positions.

Line item transfers might be part of the possibilities, Shea said. The school board has a surplus of about \$20,000 after the approval to pre-buy computer supplies for next year.

At a prior meeting, Cruz said, "We are going to get really creative" in trying to avoid layoffs.

O'Connor said he is hopeful the board can preserve the positions, through reduced hours or other means.

"Cuts to education don't heal. We believe there will be an economic recovery at some point for Hebron. We don't want to make damaging cuts between now and then that hurt the kids," O'Connor said.

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